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Believing in Alaska

Ketchikan Daily News

And the award goes to . . .

Alaska Ship and Drydock.

Presenting the award is: Gov. Sean Parnell, with support from Transportation Commissioner Marc Luiken.

During Emmy Awards week, Alaska has recognized the superior performance of its own Ketchikan Shipyard.

The shipyard, owned by the State of Alaska, will be given the opportunity to build the first of four Alaska Class ferries. It is the gateway to at least the next dozen years of shipbuilding here and an integral piece for becoming a maritime hub serving up-and-coming Arctic activities necessitating marine vessels for decades.

Alaska also will be plowing new ground by building an American ship through the construction manager-general contractor (CM-GC) method. ASD will participate in the design of the ship and then negotiate a contract with the state to build it, with a maximum guaranteed price. The method should allow the state and ASD to develop a relationship that will lead to the best ship for the money taxpayers could expect. In these times of federal government overspending, Alaska has chosen well in selecting a ship builder and building method. Plus, it owns the shipyard, and as has been pointed out repeatedly in Ketchikan, it should utilize it instead of sending economic development to Outsiders.

The incentive for ASD as well as the state to keep the project here is if they don't come to an agreement on price, the project still could be awarded to another shipyard through the bid process. Ketchikan Shipyard doesn't want that — really, neither do Alaskans — and the state hasn't had such good luck that way, as ongoing litigation involving past ferry building projects attests to.

The Alaska Class ferries will replace the ships operating on the Alaska Marine Highway System since its inception in the 1960s.

Ketchikan and Southeast have lobbied intensely for the ferries to be built by Ketchikan Shipyard. But the work has just begun. It's now up to the same "lobbyists" to support the shipyard through the CM-GC method and to the shipbuilding.

Ketchikan and its shipyard wouldn't be realizing this project without Gov. Parnell's commitment to economic development in Alaska. A wise steward of Alaska's resources, he not only understands the import of protecting the resource while providing jobs for Alaskans, but has made it clear — if anyone doubted it — where his loyalties lie. Our governor believes in Alaskans.